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ABSTRACT

A positive, practical approach to parent tutoring of children is presented in this booklet. Suggestions for how to listen and react to one's child, how to use associations to promote easy learning, and how to reinforce positive behavior and encourage independence are provided. Each chapter sets out a step-by-step system. An easy collaborative method for determining a child's learning and studying style, its strengths and latencies, its priorities and discomforts is described. A description of how to use this understanding to promote motivation is presented. The introduction claims that the actual content of homework assignments is far less important than the attitude with which they are approached, and that it is the development of a love of learning and a strong desire to pursue learning independently is what counts. The nine chapters address "how to": (1) complement the school; (2) actively listen and accurately respond; (3) personalize parent tutoring; (4) promote motivation; (5) use associations; (6) "task out" content; (7) seek goals; (8) reinforce learning; and (9) develop an independent learner. Numbered lists and examples supplement the text. (ABL)

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By Daniel E. Vogler and David E. Hutchins

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PARENTS AS TUTORS

MINIMIZING THE HOMEWORK HASSLE

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Introduction

By Anne Henderson

What I like about *Parents As Tutors* is its positive, practical approach. There is a wealth of good suggestions for how to listen and react to your child, how to use associations to promote easy learning, how to reinforce positive behavior and encourage independence. Each chapter sets out a step-by-step system, then summarizes as it goes along.

Particularly useful is the section on how to tailor, or personalize, tutoring to your own child. Each child is different. Each has a configuration of qualities that is unique. How do you recognize what it is and make it work, for him or her — and for you? This book describes an easy collaborative method for determining your child's learning and studying style, its strengths and latencies, its priorities and discomforts. Then it recommends how to use this understanding to promote motivation.

Is It Necessary?

Not too long ago, many parents and educators shared the opinion that once a child enters school, it is best to leave education to the professionals. After all, the argument went, they are the ones trained to do the job. Besides, the structure of modern curricula is probably too complex for most parents to grasp (remember the New Math?). And what about the parents who can barely read or write — how could they help their children learn anything?

Now we know otherwise. Although our common sense may have whispered it all along, the research has become overwhelmingly clear: *parent involvement — and that means all kinds of parents — improves student achievement.*

This is true whether parents are well-educated or just grade-school graduates; what counts is the positive attitude parents convey to their children about the importance of a good education and the confidence they will succeed.

The effects of involving parents in education seem to extend beyond the immediate family and well past the short term. Some of the major benefits researchers have documented:

- Higher grades and test scores, throughout a student's career
- Positive attitudes and behavior, for students *and* teachers
- More successful academic programs
- More effective schools

We are also well on our way to knowing the characteristics of schools that work well with all kinds of children, even those from low-income and minority families. As we might expect, one of those characteristics is a close relationship with parents. We are also beginning to form a picture of families whose children do well in school regardless of their background.

It is interesting, if not entirely surprising, that the characteristics of effective schools and successful families are similar: strong leadership, high expectations of children, a clear sense of purpose, an orderly climate, and frequent monitoring of student progress. This understanding can do much to help educators and parents reinforce one another's efforts and recognize what is most important to do.

Effective Use of Time

But for most parents, a big question remains. How can we make the best use of our limited time, beyond providing an orderly, positive, and purposeful environment? An excellent way is to help our children with school work at home, regularly. *Parents As Tutors* sets out a very useful, systematic approach, one that is consistent with the best advice about how to develop children's independent learning habits. And it will pay off: a recent analysis of research at the University of Illinois suggests that as much as one-half the difference in

student grades and test scores can be traced to parents' participation in school-related activities at home.

On first reflection, it may seem a rather limited role for a parent, to set aside a half-hour a day to make sure homework gets done correctly. But that simple task allows parents to communicate their high expectations and monitor their children's academic progress. It also helps parents work better with teachers, especially if a child seems to have a recurring problem with some aspect of learning. And parents will learn, over the course of study, how the school's curriculum is designed and carried out. Helping with homework, then, can be a very useful training ground for other critical parent roles in education as monitor, advocate, mediator, decision-maker, even policy-maker.

The Number-One Problem

Starting out with the many inventive and positive techniques in *Parents As Tutors* can also prevent what many parents, social workers, and psychologists say is the number-one family problem: conflict over — you guessed it — unfinished homework.

For a family already coping with this ugly monster, some advice from a distinguished clinical psychologist, Dr. William Stixrud, can ease the way into the *Parents As Tutors* approach.

1. If the child has been consistently refusing to do homework, regardless of your threats and punishments, remember that he is like a stuck door: the more you pull, the harder it sticks. Lay off for a few days and let the air clear.

2. Explain, in a calm, loving way, that you do not intend to fight over homework any longer. Using your own words, say something like this: "I was mistaken in thinking that it was *my* job to make sure that the work gets done, because it is really *your* job to do it. I am not going to hassle you any more."

3. Then explain that you are available when help is needed, so long as the help is requested and accepted when offered. Set time limits, such as between 7:00 and 8:00 weekday evenings, and stick to it. If, for

example, your child has not requested help but panics at bedtime because the work is not done, be firm. Suggest that he go to bed as usual and finish in the morning, but remind him that you are available only in the evenings.

4. Provide an orderly environment for working. This means keeping distractions, such as background noise and activity, to a minimum. It is hardly fair to expect a child to focus on schoolwork when the rest of the family is watching TV.

5. Help your child develop a system of rewards for meeting homework goals. These could include an outing with you, or staying up late to watch a special show. Your job is to help the child develop ways to become self-motivated, not to offer direct rewards.

Keep the Goal in Mind

Best of all is the goal of *Parents As Tutors*: to create an independent learner. The actual content of homework assignments is far less important than the attitude with which they are approached. Not completing every single assignment down to the last decimal point, but developing a love for learning and a strong desire to pursue learning independently, is what counts. It is hard to imagine that a family who uses the approach in this book would not be successful.

Anne Henderson, author of *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement* and co-author of *Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working With Parents*, is an Associate with the National Committee for Citizens in Education and has conducted talks and workshops around the country on promoting parent-school partnerships.

I. How Do You Complement the School?

Tutoring your children is a natural and fun way to enrich their education. This booklet gives a brief overview of parent tutoring that helps you develop tutoring skills as you work easily with your child. The situation in your home should determine whether you sprint right away or start with a calm job. Here are five suggestions to help you get started.

Use This Book

This booklet provides a systematic and educationally sound approach to understanding and responding to homework problems, based on research and personal experiences in counseling and teaching. The approach *is not* a "quick fix" or a random list of activities. Rather, it is an organized set of parent tutoring tasks designed to produce positive results when applied in the tutoring situation.

This booklet contains nine sections to prepare you to help your child grow in becoming an independent learner, including in each section specific descriptions of tasks you may use at home. You need *not* be in the school to use the tasks.

Review the outline below and start reading the section that interests you most. Though the sequence is good as a whole, each section was written to be useful independently. Combined, these individual resources form the overall approach.

Content Focus

Section Title	Focus
1. Complementing the School	The school can't do it all
2. Listening/Responding to Child	Listening for meaning
3. Personalizing Parent-Child Interaction	We're all different
4. Promoting Motivation	The beginning of independence
5. Making Associations	Learning can be fun
6. Tasking-Out Content	Anything can be made simpler
7. Setting Goals	Knowing where you're going helps
8. Reinforcing Learning	Manipulation isn't all bad
9. Developing the Independent Learner	The making of a self-starter

Provide a Good Study Space Free From Distractions

Help your child understand that school studies are his or her *work*. Learning is a career that takes about 13 years of practice, but lasts a lifetime. Anything this important deserves the most pleasant and practical location. A study space doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. The best location is a simple, quiet place with good lighting, a table, and a comfortable chair. (The TV room should be off-limits unless the TV is off during working hours.)

You and your child can set up a work station using a hollow door, six concrete blocks, a lamp, and a chair, for less

than $30.00. Get school supplies such as pencils, paper, a ruler, dictionary, etc., so these items are convenient and time is not wasted hunting for them around the house. The location, design, and painting of a work area can even be a learning experience.

Establish a Routine

You and the child need to establish a specified time in which the child expects to study, for the same period every work day. Ideally, it should be 30 minutes at the same time for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday. You get Friday and Saturday off!

We also suggest that you start each session by briefly writing an agenda, which will help organize you and the child while building a sense of positive expectation. Often you'll want to do the following: (a) *review* what was learned/tutored during the previous session, (b) *identify* what is to be learned/tutored this time, (c) *learn/tutor* new content, and (d) *quiz* for mastery of content. Other sections will describe the best way to review, identify, learn, and quiz.

Nothing is more important than *establishing a routine*. Please note that the 30 minutes is *your* investment; the child may need to work longer than this to complete the homework assignments. However, you can assist with the planning, helping, and quizzing in 30 minutes or less.

Supplement the Teacher

The teacher has 300 minutes of your child's time each day and probably uses *group instruction* most of the time. Parent tutoring means working with that teacher to supplement this group instruction for your *individual* student.

Group instruction is a "top-down" learning environment where the teacher tries to pour information into students — all at the same time. Parent tutoring supplements this with a "bottom-up" tutoring process. You *start* by recognizing the special strengths of your child and building on them.

The concepts presented in this booklet help you do things the teacher can't do. Teachers can often provide good ideas about what the child needs *your* help learning to do. Remember, *you supplement the teacher:* the teacher is primary. You

can be a parent tutor without being directly involved in what goes on at school. You provide help with homework, *not* the day-to-day classroom teaching.

Enrich/Remediate/Practice Your Child's Learning

The teacher provides most of the content, usually directing it toward the average ability of your child's class. The parent tutor helps to enrich, remediate, and practice at the specific pace of the individual child. This helps every child (whether above average, average, or below average) to benefit more.

The keys are:

- *Enrich* — find the child's strengths of learning and *stretch* them;
- *Remediate* — find the child's limitations to learning and *strengthen* them;
- *Practice* — combine the child's strengths and limitations and *use* them to repeatedly *practice* learning particular types of content.

"Enrich/remediate/practice" becomes "stretch, strengthen, and use" skills that are taught in school.

Summary

Complementing the school as a parent tutor is a systematic and educationally sound approach to diagnosing and responding to homework problems. Do these things to be a effective tutor:

1. **Use this book.**
2. **Provide a good study space.**
3. **Establish a homework routine.**
4. **Supplement the teacher.**
5. **Enrich/remediate/practice child's learning.**

II. How Do You Actively Listen and Accurately Respond?

To communicate well the parent (a) hears, (b) interprets, (c) evaluates, and (d) responds. All four go on at the same time in the process of active listening and accurate responding. Here are six tips:

Encourage Parent-Child Talk

Children need to talk. Do things that inspire your child to interact with you easily and enthusiastically. If you have not been doing this, start now! In parent tutoring *the child is meant to be seen, heard, and understood!*

Avoid Interrupting

How often have you scolded your child for interrupting, and then proceeded to interrupt him? Letting children complete statements allows them to see how they process information; false information or flaws in logical presentation will stand out to the child, which can lead to self-correction. *You* can discover these flaws too, only if you actively *listen* to *everything* your child says and note *how* it was said.

Use Silence

There are times when silence is very important. If the child seems to be processing thoughts, feelings, or actions, silence is perfect: let it be broken only by the child. If you have trouble keeping your mouth shut, then count, in your head, "Mississippi one, Mississippi two, Mississippi three,"

and so on up to ten. The ten seconds of *your* silence required for such counting often gives rise to ideas — for both of you. Most importantly, you show the child that you have really been paying attention and listening — even to the silence.

Ask Questions

Questions are also important. Two main types of questions are *open* and *closed*.

Use open questions. Open questions invite your child to talk and think about content. They often begin with the words "what," "where," "when," "why," and "how." Open questions help your child become *involved* in the knowledge and should be used often by the parent tutor. Instead of pinpointing information, they inspire *ideas*.

Examples of Open Questions

"What" questions often get thinking responses:

"What is 8 times 6?"

"What happens if water is frozen and the sun comes out?"

"What happens when you turn in poor homework?"

"Why" questions often get feeling responses:

"Why do you feel the way you do?"

"Why did you feel happy when you finished your science project?"

"Why do you dislike starting homework?"

"How" questions often get acting responses:

"How can you make it work better?"

"How can you get your homework assignment?"

"How can you check the homework problems?"

P.S. Sometimes questions mix thinking, feeling, and/or acting responses. These are good to use if you need the information.

1. **What do you *think* you could *do* to make you *feel* better about spelling?**
2. **How do you *think* you would *feel* if a friend had *cheated* on homework?**
3. **What do you *think* you could *get done* on your paper if you worked for 30 minutes?**

Use closed questions. Closed questions can be answered with a yes or no or a fact. They help us find out quickly what is known and unknown and are easy to ask and easy to answer. Closed questions are good for pinpointing information. Chances are you can't overuse closed questions — unless you use them in place of open questions.

Examples of Closed Questions

Closed questions generally begin with words such as:

Do you ... ?
Have you ... ?
Are you ... ?
Can you ... ?
Should you ... ?
Could you ... ?
Were you ... ?

and *require* only a yes or no response or very specific information.

Some examples:

Do you have your homework assignments?
Are you interested in starting your homework now?
Should you read the text before doing the worksheet?
Were you happy with the results of your homework yesterday?

Make Harmony/Disharmony Observations

The parent tutor should be alert to differences between the child's thoughts (T), feelings (F), and actions (A). Share these differences with the child.

Examples of Differences

1. **Saying one thing (T), but doing another (A).**
2. **Feeling one way (F), but saying something else (T).**
3. **Acting (A) that differs from what is said (T) or how it is said (F).**

Also point out consistencies to your child. ("I'm pleased that you finished doing your spelling (A) as you said you would (T). Do you feel better (F) having done your spelling?") The process of reflecting on consistencies and inconsistencies helps communication and understanding. Ultimately, the child also learns to make these observations about himself. When this occurs, you may be sure that an independent learner is growing.

Ask for Feedback From Your Child

As a parent tutor *you* also need encouragement. There are some very special questions to ask of the child. They are: (a) How am I doing? (b) What am I doing right? and (c) What would you suggest that I do differently? You are truly a big success when the response to the last question (c) is "I think I can do my homework all by myself now. Thank you for helping me."

Summary

Active listening is attending to what is said and how it is said. Accurate responding is replying to the child's meaning. Do these things to actively listen and accurately respond:

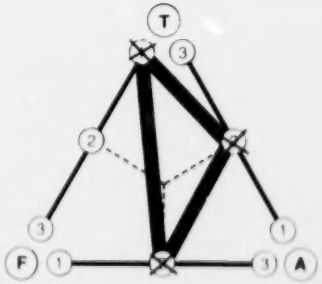
1. **Encourage dialogue between you and the child.**
2. **Avoid interrupting your child.**
3. **Use silence appropriately.**
4. **Ask questions.**
5. **Show that you note harmony or disharmony.**
6. **Ask your child for feedback.**

III. How Do You Personalize Parent Tutoring?

Conduct TFA Assessment

Behavior includes how you think, feel, and act. Everyone uses these three modes of behavior in a unique way, emphasizing one or another in different tasks. Here is a system for determining your own behavior pattern. To determine your pattern, draw a triangle with three equal sides. At the top put Thinking (T), on the bottom right put Acting (A), and on the bottom left, put Feeling (F). Then think of how you behave in specific situations, and put an **X** in the place where you see yourself on each side of the triangle (No. 1, 2, or 3). Each side is a continuum, from T→F, F→A, and A→T. Connect these three points. The lines form a pattern inside the triangle as shown below.

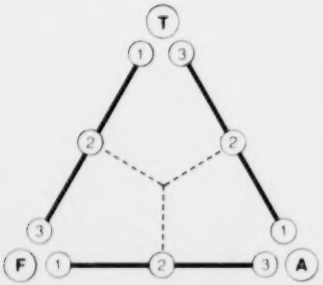
T = THINKING
F = FEELING
A = ACTING



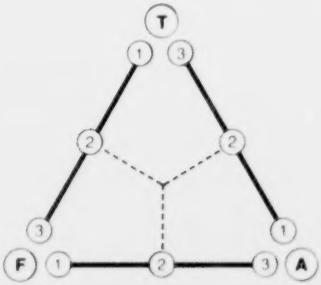
Sample TFA Assessment

1. **On the T→F side, the person tended to be more Thinking than Feeling and marked No. 1 closest to the T.**
2. **On the F→A side, the person indicated behavior was about equally made up of Feelings and Acting and marked No. 2 in the middle.**
3. **On the A→T side, the person indicated that behavior in the situation was also about in the middle between Thinking and Acting.**
4. **Then, connect the points and you get a pattern that reflects your behavior in the specific situation. In the above example, the person's pattern tended to emphasize Thinking, and to be in the middle between Feeling and Acting.**

Do this for *yourself* as you think how you tend to behave in the situation of helping your child with homework. Just for fun, also do a second triangle in which you assess your behavior *in general*. Is there a difference? If so, what are the implications for helping your child with homework?



Helping Child with Homework



My Behavior in General

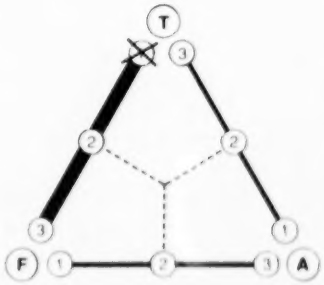
Numbers on each side of the triangle relate to questions below to help you assess behavior. Talk to your child about his behavior in the homework situation, then decide together where to place a point on each side of the triangle. Then work together to determine *your* triangle.

Here are some questions to help guide you.

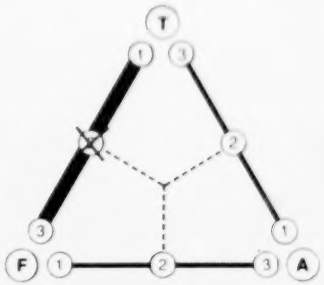
Determine TFA Triangle

Thinking—Feeling

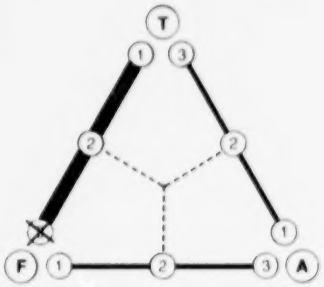
1. Does your child tend to Think things through, plan, and organize homework? Does he tend to be interested in the ideas, issues, principles, and concepts behind the events? If so, he is likely to be more toward the T end of the T—F side of the triangle.



2. Does your child tend to think things through but also balance this with an awareness of feelings and emotions? If so, he is likely to be about in the middle of the T—F side of the triangle.

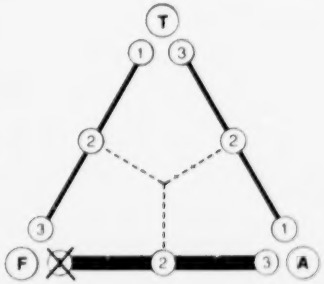


3. Does your child usually go with Feelings and emotions, waiting for the right inspiration? Do the emotions and feelings associated with particular issues and events seem to excite your child? If so, he is likely to be closer to the F end of the T—F side of the triangle.

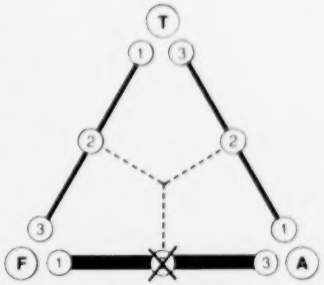


Feeling—Acting

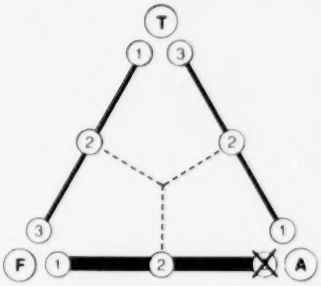
1. Is your child most likely to respond to situations in terms of Feelings and emotions? Does he tend to feel bubbly and excited or annoyed and uncomfortable with homework? If so, he is likely to be closer to the F end of the F—A side of the triangle.



2. Does your child tend to react to situations with feelings and also take action or *do* something about the feelings? If so, he is about in the middle of the F—A side of the triangle.

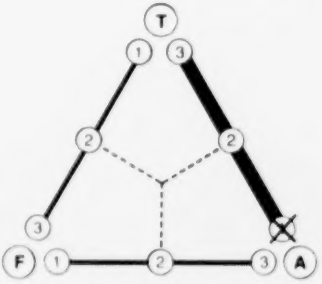


3. Is your child interested in what makes things the way they are (Actions) or what actions lead to certain other actions, or what makes things work? If so, he is likely to be closer to the A end of the F—A side of the triangle.

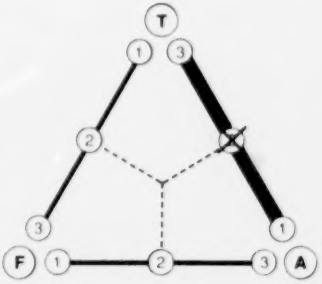


Acting—Thinking

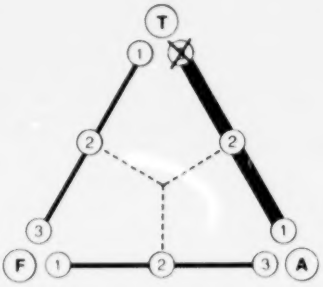
1. Would your child rather be an active participant in events and activities than to watch others? Does your child like to tackle the task, getting right down to business, completing assignments and projects? If so, he is likely to be closer to the A end of the A—T side of the triangle.



2. Does your child Think about the situation (perhaps quickly or deliberately) and also tend to do something (take action) to make something happen? If so, he is about in the middle of the A—T side of the triangle.

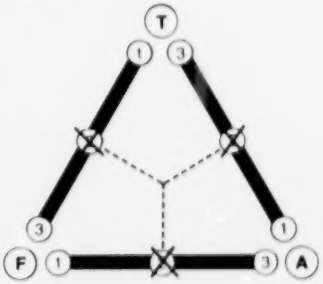


3. Does your child prefer to be an observer, to watch or read about the situation? Does your child mostly Think about what needs to be done, planning and organizing tasks and priorities for others? If so, he is likely to be closer to the T end of the A—T side of the triangle.

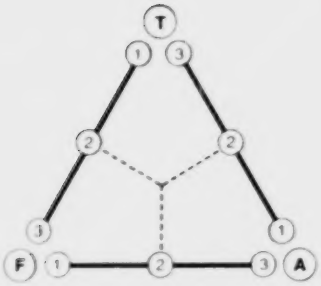


About Equal on Each Side of the Triangle

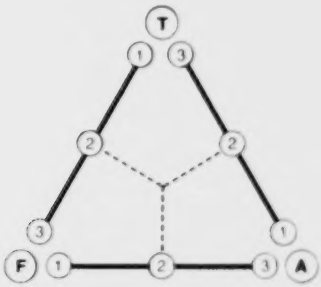
Does your child seem to respond to the situation with about equal Thoughts and Feelings, about equal Feelings and Actions, and about equal Actions and Thoughts? If so, you placed a point in the middle of each side of the triangle. This middle point on each side pattern inside means that you can use a wider variety of methods to stimulate and interact with your child. This represents a strength.



With these questions in mind, complete a triangle for your *child's* behavior for each side of the triangle (a) in the homework situation and (b) in general. When you connect the points on each side, a pattern is formed that reflects your child's thoughts, feelings, and actions (a) in the homework situation and (b) in general.



Homework Situation



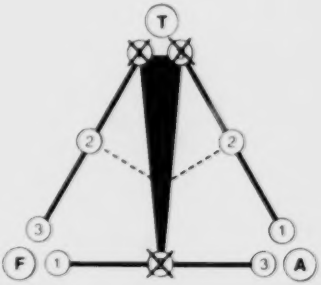
General Behavior

NOTE: It is important to stress that there is no right or wrong pattern. In specific situations, however, some patterns may prove to be more effective than others.

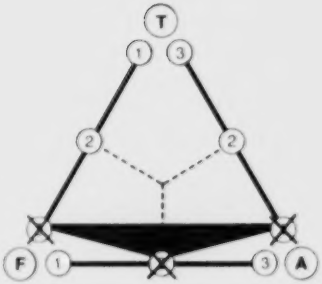
Interpret TFA Patterns

Generally you can assess the pattern in terms of where most of it falls — in the T, F, or A section of the triangle.

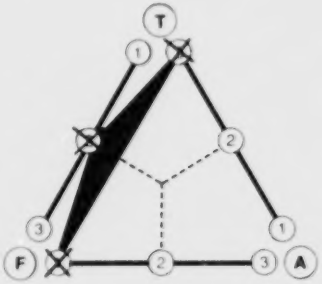
Pattern (a) falls mostly in the T area and in the area between the F and A areas. Thus, the person is likely to be highly oriented toward Thinking and evenly balanced between having feelings about the situation and taking action on it.



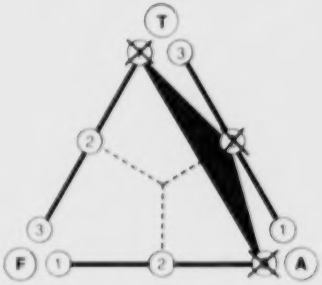
Pattern (b) falls very much in the F and A areas and midway between them. Thus, the person is likely to be strongly affected by feelings and to take action based on these emotions.



Pattern (c) is one who is balanced about equally between the T and F areas of the triangle. What this suggests is one who thinks a great deal about the situation, has fairly strong feelings about it, but is slow to take action on the situation.



Pattern (d) falls in the middle between T and A. This suggests one who thinks, plans, and organizes information, then takes action to get the job done. A relative absence of F may suggest that the person may be slow to see how the behavior affects others.



Summary: It is most helpful to talk about the TFA patterns with your child. What does the pattern suggest about behavior in the specific situation? What are strong areas? What does a relative absence of one orientation of the pattern suggest? Does the child need to consider some changes? Do you need

to consider changes as a parent tutor? Why might these changes be needed? What benefits could result? How might changes help the child, etc.? For example, if your child plunges into a worksheet assignment without reading directions, then he may need to *Think* before *Acting*. If your child immediately "hates" something, then she may need to *Think* about the consequences of this *Feeling*. If your child is always *Thinking* but never seems to get started, then he may need *Action*-oriented steps.

There are six responses these patterns should inspire. Based on your analysis, you can:

(a) Build on strengths

(b) Supplement the behavior

(c) Arrange TFA activities in the right sequence

(d) Use the ideal parent-tutor TFA patterns

(e) Relate TFA patterns to listening/responding and motivating

(f) Relate TFA patterns to concepts of learning

Each of these is discussed below.

Build on Strengths

Give your greatest attention to the points on the triangle which are closest to T, and/or F, and/or A. If your child is mainly *Thinking* oriented, take advantage of this strength! Ask questions that trigger thoughts and ideas. If your child is *Feeling* oriented, ask questions that cause your child to consider feelings and emotions involved in the situation. If your child is *Acting* oriented, ask questions that relate to how to do things.

Supplement the TFA Pattern

When your child needs help, try to figure out the child's problem. Looking at the behavior triangle can help you to build on strengths and recognize what to do to help with the homework situation. After starting with the strength(s), move to add experiences that are not strong. For instance, if T is strong, start with T and then add experiences that are F and/or A.

Examples

Strengths in Thinking

Help your child think about facts, ideas, numbers, and concepts that can be applied to the situation. Ask questions that get the child to think conceptually about the situation, such as:

a. What do these two things have in common?

b. Where would you need to go in order to find ...?

c. What are the four principles of ...?

Strengths in Feeling

Help your child consider what feelings, emotions, and attitudes might be a part of the situation, such as:

a. Why did the pilgrims need to live so closely together in the early days in America?

b. How do you think Columbus *felt* when his men were afraid the ship would sail off the edge of the earth?

c. If you were put in jail because your skin color was different from most people, how would it make you *feel?*

Strengths in Acting (Actions)

Help your child to consider what can be done to get the task completed by asking questions such as:

a. *How would you stack* the blocks to build the strongest tower?

b. *What would you do* if someone offered you some candy and told you it would make you feel really good? (Note, you can talk about T, F, and A with this question.)

c. What steps would you take to improve the student organization in your school?

Each of these areas (thinking, feeling, and acting) relates to only one dominant mode of behavior. In fact, many people have two or even three areas in which they can excel. If your child has two or three areas of equal strength, you can use *all* these to interact with and motivate your child. You have more options on ways to help your child with homework.

Arrange TFA Activities in the Right Sequence

Begin with the easiest (most likely) and move to the hardest (least likely) while building on the child's strengths.

Assume that on the TFA triangle your daughter mainly has a Feeling-Thinking (F—T) pattern in the homework situation. She is more F than A and more T than A.

a. *Acknowledge her strengths.* Ask her how she would feel if ... (then you fill in the appropriate homework topic area question). Encourage her to consider what it must have *felt* like to be (some person or to be in some situation).

b. Then *supplement* her F strengths by asking her to *think* about facts, ideas, concepts, principles, etc., that relate to the particular situation.

c. Finally, ask her *what* she could *do* to accomplish the task.

For such an F—T person, the parent tutor builds on the Feeling and Thinking strengths, and encourages the child to move into the Acting area as necessary in order to get the homework done.

Use Ideal Parent-Tutor TFA Patterns

Because of your experience, you have a great advantage over your child. You can see things in a much broader perspective. By actively listening and responding to your child, you can help broaden how she looks at things. You can do this by being aware of *your* specific pattern on the TFA triangle while helping your child with homework. Adapt whenever there is a big difference between your pattern and your child's. Use your strengths while moving toward the center of each continuum. This puts you in a less biased position, enabling you to see what your child is doing.

Use TFA To Motivate Your Child

TFA can also promote motivation. The parent tutor, keeping in mind the child's dominant orientation, can motivate him by putting strengths to best use and compensating for weaknesses. The following section on motivation explains the application of these principles.

Relate TFA to Concepts of Learning

Some learning strategies are more effective when used in a TFA context. These include association, tasking-out content, goal seeking, and stimulus-response-reinforcement. Explanation of the strategies are provided in sections that follow.

In conclusion, parent tutors have an important job. You must *complement the school* to help your child maximize *opportunities* for learning. Thus, you try to think, feel, and act to *supplement and compensate the in-school learning experiences.*

Summary

In personalized tutoring, the parent tailors homework according to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of both parent and child.

TFA Operational Tasks

1. **Conduct TFA Assessment**
2. **Determine TFA Triangle**
3. **Interpret TFA Patterns**
4. **Build on Strengths**
5. **Supplement TFA Pattern**
6. **Arrange TFA Activities in the Right Sequence**
7. **Use the Ideal TFA Parent-Tutor Pattern**
8. **Use TFA To Motivate Your Child**
9. **Relate TFA to Learning Concepts**

IV. How Can You Promote Motivation?

Motivation is the condition of wanting to respond. Without motivation there will be no response and no learning. The parent *cannot* directly motivate the child; the child must become motivated from within. The parent can, however, create a climate for motivation. Three areas from which motivation flows are (a) encouragement, (b) structure, and (c) interest.

Apply Encouragement to Motivation

As a parent, you can help set up the situation in which the child *wants* to do the task. You can do this by talking with the child about the benefits of doing the task.

Sample Motivation/Encouragement Practices

1. ***Accept the child.*** **(a) *Do* compliment. (b) *Do* tell the child what you like. (c) *Do* tell the child about your good feelings toward him.**
2. ***Apply pleasing responses.*** **Pleasing responses increase desired behaviors. While you could apply unpleasing responses such as punishment or threat of punishment, these create hurt feelings and often become barriers to learning.**

3. ***Identify child's needs.*** **If the child needs security, give it. If the child needs room to *try* — even at the risk of failure — let it happen. (Of course, you would never deliberately want to have the child do something that is dangerous!) Always be ready to add to or encourage new experiences.**

4. ***Be sure that the context is meaningful, useful, and relevant to the child.*** **Be sure to ask "why" questions. For instance, "Why is it important to be able to name the states in the United States?"**

Apply Structure to Motivation

Structure helps to organize things for the child. Help the child see the meaning and importance of activities, how they relate to goals, how they will help the child, and how the activities are limited. Too often, the child looks at assignments as being far too big — "It will take forever, I can't possibly do all that work," etc. Parents provide structure when they help to break down content into realistic tasks that can be done, and are meaningful for the child.

Sample Motivation/Structure Practices

1. **Help the child to *break down content into tasks.* (Solve long division problems.)**

2. ***Cause child to set goals.*** **(I will solve 10 long division problems in 20 minutes.)**

3. ***Ask "why" questions.*** **Continue to ask the child "Why is this important?"**

Apply Interest to Motivation

Interest is what causes us to want to do something. It can be generated in many ways. However, some sure-fire practices help the child to "THINK," "CHALLENGE," and "APPLY" the content.

Sample Motivation/Interest Practices

1. *Think.* Arouse curiosity.
2. *Think.* Ask thought questions.
3. *Think.* Encourage discussion.
4. *Challenge.* Balance cooperation with others and competition to succeed.
5. *Challenge.* Cause child to set a specific, realistic goal.
6. *Challenge.* Cause child to accept or review goals.
7. *Apply.* Encourage use of information.
8. *Apply.* Relate new information or skills to known information or skills.
9. *Apply.* Help organize what's to come so the child knows that assignments are realistic.

Summary

Motivation comes when your child wants to do homework. You promote motivation when you do these things:

1. Accept the child as he is today.
2. Apply positive encouragement.
3. Identify your child's needs/desires/wants.
4. Establish that homework is meaningful, useful, and relevant.
5. Break down homework into smaller (do-able) tasks.
6. Cause the child to set goals.
7. Ask "why" questions.

8. **Create curiosity.**
9. **Ask thought questions.**
10. **Balance cooperation and competition.**
11. **Relate new information to old information.**
12. **Encourage the child to use new information.**
13. **Organize homework in advance.**

V. How Do You Use Associations?

Systematically! The concept of association is oriented toward both tutor and child because repeated use of this concept results in the child's making associations consciously. Association learning relates new information to information already known through (a) likenesses, (b) differences, and (c) space relationships. This, in turn, moves the child closer to becoming an independent learner. Here are four easy steps to using association concepts.

Clarify the Assignment

What is your child to know upon completion of the homework assignment? Start with the assignment itself. (If your child has forgotten the homework assignment, you'll need to get it before progressing.) The assignment often calls upon a specific skill: spelling, making computations, writing, or reading. Pinpoint the things your child must know to do well on the assignment, especially on writing and reading assignments, which often contain facts that must be learned. Simply reading or writing won't insure that they are learned.

Use associations to learn the facts and then test to see if the child has mastered the facts. An association is a memory device that helps us to recall facts. A familiar example is "i before e except after c."

The child is likely to look at homework as spelling, math, a report, or history. It is important for the parent tutor to help the child specify what needs to be done for each assignment. The chart that follows shows how the parent helps the child to clarify specific tasks that need to be done.

Sample Assignments

Child's version of assignment	Parent clarifies the specific assignment
Spelling	**Spell 25 words.**
Math	**Solve ten long division problems.**
Report	**Write three-page essay on mining gold.**
History	**Read chapter 14 on Virginia history.**
	Note: This clarifies the assignment. You and the child now know specifically what must be done.

Identify Knowledge

The second step is to *find out what the child already knows about the content.* This gives a starting point for relating new content. It also indicates what does not need to be taught.

A relaxed oral quiz can identify what your child already knows.

The example below *clarified* the homework assignment. The statement was then followed by a series of questions. The questions are necessary to find out what the child already knows and feels. When the child responds it creates an association between *what is already known* and *what is to be learned.* Answers to these questions lead directly to the third step.

Sample Questions:

Parent tutor: **Your assignment is to *spell 25 words.* Note that italicized parts of tutor questions help specify content to be learned. (Following are sample questions to ask the child.)**

1. ***Why*** **is it important to spell these words?**
2. ***How*** **many do you already know?**
3. ***How*** **do you spell _____, _____, etc.?**
4. ***What*** **do you need to remember so that you spell each word correctly?**

Parent tutor: **Your assignment is to *solve 10 long division problems.* (Following are sample questions to ask the child.)**

1. ***Why*** **is it important that you be able to solve long division problems?**
2. ***What*** **is long division?**
3. ***How*** **is long division like other math problems?**
4. ***How*** **is long division different from other math problems?**

Parent tutor: **Your assignment is to *write a three-page essay on gold mining.* (Following are sample questions to ask the child.)**

1. ***Why*** **is it important to be able to write an essay?**
2. ***Why*** **is it important to write about gold mining?**
3. ***What*** **are the main parts of an essay?**
4. ***What*** **information should go into each part?**
5. ***How*** **can you get information on gold mining?**
6. ***How*** **will you write the essay?**

Parent tutor: **Your assignment is to *read chapter 14 on Virginia (or your state) history.***

1. ***Why*** **is it important that you read about Virginia history?**
2. ***What*** **kinds of information will you be looking to find?**
3. ***How*** **can you organize the information you find?**

Create Associations

The third step is to link the unknown to the known, using likenesses, differences, and spatial relationships. You can use associations already created by others or make up your own.

Making associations by likenesses. Many of us already think about how things are alike. Learning names is often accomplished through likeness associations: we liken certain names to *girls* and certain names to *boys*. Sometimes we liken the short name to the fact that a person is short. Further, we often liken the first letter of the name with something about the person — jumping John, sweet Sarah, macho Mark, and neat Nancy.

Recalling the number and names of the continents can be accomplished with association. *Numbers* and *beginning letters* form likeness associations. All we need to do is to liken the fact that there are "six A and one E" continents. Thus, the association reveals that there are seven continents, including America (North), America (South), Africa, Asia, Antarctica, Australia, and Europe.

Acronyms are another common device for helping memory. What about US, IRS, EEO, UAW, NAACP, UL? If you don't know these, ask another parent. Other acronyms have passed the test of time. If you've studied music, you probably likened "FACE" to the notes between the lines on the treble clef. I can still recall the ten essential amino acids for swine production using "THAT PILL MV."

You can use likeness associations for remembering facts. Make games of these things for both you and your child. For example, when going to the grocery store, try to remember your list with associations and acronyms. Likeness associations help to break large amounts of content into smaller packages for later use.

Hint:

Parent tutors can activate likeness associations by asking themselves and their children: How is this new content like something we already know?

Making associations by differences. Another way of making associations is to look at how things are different. Think of the differences we note about people — gender, race, age, personality, and attractiveness, to mention a few. In economics, we often consider "land, labor, capital or management." In math we think of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, whole numbers, fractions, etc. In social science we think of before, during, and after. All these patterns relate to differences. There are no two pieces of content that are exactly the same.

Help the child think about how new content is different from what is already known. This can often be accomplished by simply asking and talking with your child about comparisons, contrasts, disadvantages, and advantages of old and new content.

Examples of Differences

1. **How does the word "deer" compare with "dear"? What are the differences? (You gave your "ear" to someone who is special [dear].)**
2. **How would you contrast long division with short division? How are they different?**
3. **What are the advantages and disadvantages between writing a paragraph and a three-page essay? What are the differences?**

Hint:

Parent tutors also stimulate thinking about differences by asking themselves and their child: How is this new content different from something already known?

Making association by using spatial relationships. Spatial relationships mean that you form a mental image of *how* and *where* one thing relates to another. This form of association is a bit more complicated but produces great results.

Examples of Space Relationships

***Where* certain things are *located* in relationship to each other, e.g., back, front, up, down, side, top, bottom, middle, half way, over, under, around, through, etc.**

Remember when you took a test and could recall that the answer was on page 94, the right side of the book, and the lower half of the page? You may even have been able to conjure up the answer through deeper mental image making. This was association using spatial relationships.

Lists, figures, and tables are devices that can help us make spatial associations. A list of four steps written on a 3×5 card is an example of this form of association. You may remember the image of a solar system figure and recall the planets by starting with Mercury, closest to the sun, and ending with Pluto, the farthest from the sun. Further, note that Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune form the acronym SUN! The multiplication table is another example. The rows and columns create spatial associations.

Parent tutors can play a key role in applying learning through spatial relationships. An old saying, "If you can't draw it, you don't know it," aptly applies. The process of forming lists, figures, and tables can condense large amounts of information, accent likenesses, and pinpoint differences between and among the parts. Children tutored in this fashion soon start to apply the concept themselves with tremendous savings in time and increases in learning.

Hint:

Parent tutors activate spatial associations by asking themselves and their child: How is this new content arranged in relation to what we already know?

Use Associations

The fourth step necessary for making effective associations is using them. Likenesses, differences, and space imprints trigger memory, and the techniques are useful throughout life.

You can help create associations, and then ask your child questions that require the use of associations. If the child uses an association three times, he has probably learned it. Remember: large amounts of information can be grouped and recognized by likenesses; differences set things apart; and spatial associations locate place.

Some of our favorite associations are provided in the following list. Note that you and your child can use existing associations or create new ones.

Favorite Examples:

1. **Spelling: "I" before "E" except after "C," or when sounded as "A" as in "neighbor" and "weigh."**
2. **Math: The sum of the digits in the products of 9s multiplication is always 9. (9×2=18 [1+8=9]; 9×3=27 [2+7=9])**
3. **Chemistry: Elements in their natural state are either solid, liquid, or gas.**
4. **Music: *E*very *G*ood *B*oy *D*oes *F*ine represents the line notes of the treble clef scale.**
5. **Physics: $E=MC^2$ is a formula to explain the relationship among energy, mass, and the speed of light.**
6. **Physics: R O Y G B I V represents the colors in the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet).**
7. **Cooking: A pint is a pound the world around.**
8. **Spelling: Expen$e, not expence.**

Summary

Association links new information to old information through likenesses, differences, and spatial relationships. Use associations by helping the child to:

1. **Clarify what homework is to be done.**
2. **Identify what the child already knows.**
3. **Create likeness associations.**
4. **Create difference associations.**
5. **Create spatial associations.**
6. **Help the child to use the associations in daily activities.**

VI. How Do You "Task-Out" Content?

"Tasking-out" provides a good means of organizing content and putting it into an order that makes it easier to master. There are three steps in tasking-out: (1) *breaking* content down, (2) *learning* small parts, and (3) *combining* the parts. If the parts are small, they can be learned more easily. The parts, properly combined, form the whole. One way of tasking-out content is for the parent to set things up, but the best way is for the parent and child to work together.

Break Content Down

The child's assignment (math problems) is the whole task. The first step of tasking-out is to ask, "What do you need to know or be able to do to *(specify the assignment)*?" The answers to the question provide the broken-out parts. You need only to break a task into parts that can be easily learned — if the child can handle two or three parts, you do not need to break the task into smaller units.

Hint:

If the homework assignment seems too large for the child to handle, break it down. Your *key* to size is to ask yourself, *"Can the child learn this task without breaking it down any more?"* If "yes," don't break it down; if "no," break it down.

Choose a present tense action verb to begin each task statement. These verbs relate actively to what the child will be doing. You'll find that these words come easily.

Action verb examples:

adjust	**create**	**name**
assess	**describe**	**plan**
calculate	**explain**	**solve**
classify	**identify**	**select**
construct	**make**	**write**

Look at a homework assignment and simply make sure your description of the work starts with a present tense action verb.

Here's an example that evolves through a discussion using tasking-out:

Parent tutor:	**Nancy, do you have any homework?**
Nancy:	**Yes, math.**
Parent tutor:	**What is the assignment?**
Nancy:	**Math problems.**
Parent tutor:	**What are you to know or do?**
Nancy:	**Long division problems.**
Parent tutor:	***Solve long division problems?***
Nancy:	**Yes.**

End with a direct object. A task statement requires the present tense action verb and a noun to serve as the direct object. Let's illustrate it using the verb "solve," as above. Solve what? Solve *problems*. The noun "problems" becomes the direct object. The easiest way of making the statement complete is to ask the question "What?" with the verb.

Here are some examples:

Action Verbs		Nouns/Direct Objects
ADJUST	(what?)	CARBURETOR
CALCULATE	(what?)	ANSWERS
CONSTRUCT	(what?)	HOUSE
DESCRIBE	(what?)	ANATOMY
IDENTIFY	(what?)	PARTS
PLAN	(what?)	PAPER
WRITE	(what?)	LETTER

Master the Parts

Mastering the content means learning the smaller parts. The parts can be learned by simply doing what the tasks (parts) dictate.

Example

Big Task: Convert inches to metric

Smaller Task 1: Describe metric system
Smaller Task 2: Identify metric length measures
Smaller Task 3: Specify inches/centimeter relationship
Smaller Task 4: Develop conversion formula
Smaller Task 5: Apply conversion formula

Quiz your child. If he has not mastered a part, then that particular part needs to be broken into yet smaller parts. This process establishes the points at which tutoring is most needed.

Combine the Parts

In using the tasking-out concept, you must bring the parts together like a jigsaw puzzle — all the pieces fit together so that nothing is left out. Here are two ways of doing this.

Specific to general. List the parts from the most specific to the most general. This gives your child a good chance for immediate success, and for building success upon success. It also is a natural way to find out if a problem exists on the way to more complex concepts. If it does, then the parent tutor can break that particular part into smaller parts.

Example of specific to general task using the general task "convert inches to metric."

SPECIFIC TASKS

Tutor/Child Task 1: Identify metric length measures

Tutor/Child Task 2: Specific inches/centimeters relationship

Tutor/Child Task 3: Develop conversion formula

Tutor/Child Task 4: Apply conversion formula

Tutor/Child Task 5: Describe metric system

General to specific. The second approach is the reverse. The "big picture" will be provided first. Here, the child must detail the parts. Many children prefer this approach, which usually results in making judgments about key parts and their relationships. (The good parent tutor is sensitive to the child's preference between these two approaches.)

A general to specific example using the same five smaller tasks to "convert inches to metric."

GENERAL

Tutor/Child Task 1: Describe metric system

Tutor/Child Task 2: Develop conversion formula

Tutor/Child Task 3: Apply conversion formula

Tutor/Child Task 4: Specify inches/centimeter relationship

Tutor/Child Task 5: Identify metric length measures

(Note that the tasks are the same as in the specific to general processes but are in a different order.)

Summary

"Tasking-out" is breaking homework into smaller parts, teaching or learning the parts, and combining the parts to complete the original homework assignment. You can task-out by doing these things:

1. **Identify the homework task.**
2. **State the homework by starting with an action verb.**
3. **End the homework task statement with a direct object.**
4. **Keep the task statements simple and short.**
5. **Break down the larger task statement into smaller task statements.**
6. **Teach or learn the smaller task statements.**
7. **Combine the smaller tasks from general to specific or specific to general.**
8. **Quiz for mastery of each task statement.**

VII. How Do You Seek Goals?

Seeking goals draws the child toward accomplishment. The role of the parent tutor is to help the child set, adjust, and commit to a realistic goal. The parent tutor's actions must be compatible with the learner — the goals must be the *child's*.

Set Goals

Work with the child to identify *one* goal from which to start. Completing homework assignments is an appropriate goal.

Example of *setting* a goal:

Parent tutor:	**Nancy, do you have any homework?**
Nancy:	**Yes, math.**
Parent tutor:	**What is the assignment?**
Nancy:	**Math problems.**
Parent tutor:	**What are you to know or do?**
Nancy:	**Long division problems.**
Parent tutor:	**Solve long division problems?**
Nancy:	**Yes.**

NOW! SET THE GOAL

Parent tutor:	**Nancy, then I understand that your goal is to "solve long division problems."**
Nancy:	**Yes, the goal is to "solve long division problems."**

OR

Parent tutor: **Nancy, please state the goal.**

Nancy: **The goal is to solve long division problems.**

Promote Realistic Goals

Make sure that the goal is challenging, neither too easy nor too difficult. Determine whether or not the child already knows the content. If the goal is too easy, expand it to make it more challenging. If it is beyond reach, break it down to make it easier.

It is also helpful to work on a part of the assignment with the child. For skills, simply give a demonstration and allow the child to imitate your demonstration. This will help the child make a realistic judgment about his/her ability and lead to realistic goals.

The addition of standards for performance will also assist the student in making realistic goals. To help your child learn standards of performance, consider quantity, quality, efficiency, and durability with him.

A particularly useful set of lead questions using the four criteria areas includes:

Quantity

1. How many of *XXX* do you think you can accomplish?

Quality

2. What things should be present to insure that you're doing *XXX* correctly?

Efficiency

3. How many of *XXX* could you do in five minutes?

Durability

4. How long would you expect *XXX* to last?

Establish Commitment

Students don't accomplish their goals without a *commitment*. The final thing that parent tutors must do is promote a child's commitment. The commitment is based on the previous two components: (a) setting, and (b) promoting realistic goals. If commitment is difficult for the child, perhaps the goal has not been stated clearly, or set well, or perhaps the goal is not realistic. The parent tutor may use the stages of commitment.

Establishing commitment:

1. **Ask the child to think about whether she believes she can accomplish the goal.**
2. **Ask the child to verbalize the goal.**
3. **Ask the child to write the goal. Generally, you do not have to use all three stages. The presentation of goals is often sufficient.**

Summary

Seeking goals draws the child toward realistic accomplishment for which there is commitment.

1. **Help the child to set and adopt goals.**
2. **Help the child make the goals realistic.**
3. **Add standards for performance to the goals.**
4. **Help the child make a commitment.**

VIII. How Do You Reinforce Learning?

There are many specific things a parent can do to reinforce learning. Reinforcement promotes the practices of tutoring. Examine your evolving practices by contrasting your intentions with what actually happens. You provide stimuli, observe the child's responses, and reinforce specific behavior. Be careful to agree with your child about the responses both of you expect. Here are some examples of actions that reinforce learning from your side.

Ask Questions

The best stimulus in parent tutoring is to ask questions. The more questions, the better. *Open questions* such as "why," "what," "how," "when," and "where" tend to promote more learning and invite the child to think and talk. *Closed questions* can usually be answered with a response of "yes" or "no" or a stated fact. Most questions can be asked orally, but written questions (such as tests) can also be used.

Give Directive Statements

Giving specific directions is also an excellent stimulus. Tasks that come from breaking down assignments are excellent directive statements.

Question: How many states are there?

Directive Statement: Name the states.

Sample Directive Statements

Solve **long division math problems.**

Define **the metric system.**

Name **the states and their capitals.**

Plan **a term paper.**

Spell **the word "success."**

Draw **a picture of the three-footed dragon.**

(Although these may seem harsh, you can say them in a pleasant way.)

Discuss Reinforcers

Any differences in interpretation between parent and child can be greatly reduced by openly discussing the reinforcers. Ask the child what she considers positive, neutral, or negative responses. Another method is to make a list of reinforcers, and have the child rank or rate them for their positive or negative qualities. This approach is absolutely consistent with the principles of parent tutoring in that there is open sharing of what is expected *before* the fact.

Example: **Ask your child how she feels about:**

1. **"That's great." (and other verbal rewards)**
2. **"When you're ready for help, let me know."**
3. **"For the correct answer, here's five bucks."**
4. **"Perhaps you need to think about the answer."**

The child will probably respond in one of three general ways: likes, feels indifferent, or dislikes (or, more specifically, I'll take the five bucks). A follow-up question ("Why do you feel this way?") should show in detail how the child feels about these reinforcers.

Develop a Reinforcer Pool

We recommend that the parent develop a list of reinforcers that can be used with the child. Because reinforcers may be positive for certain children and negative for others, it is a good idea to arrange the reinforcers so your list is not totally positive or negative. Your list will help you make reinforcing a conscious and observable action.

Sample Reinforcers

Positive	Neutral	Negative (to be avoided)
"That's great"	Silence	Anger
"Super"	"That's good, but"	Shouting
"Terrific"	"Okay"	Yelling
"That's creative"	"Yes"	Hitting/ spanking
"Here's $5"		Threats
"Excellent"		

Search for Responses

Upon giving a stimulus, the parent should be attentive to responses from the child.

Example:

Situation: **You ask a question.**

Child Response: **There are several possible responses, including:**

1. **Silence**
2. **A correct answer**
3. **An incorrect answer**
5. **Standing up and walking away**
6. **Asking you a question in return**

In each of these examples the child provides you with a response you see or hear. That's great; you can now reinforce the response.

Acknowledge Responses

When you observe a response, acknowledge it. This allows you to see if you and the child agree on the message. It connects the response to the stimulus. The responses may be classified as desirable, undesirable, or neutral.

Examples:

Situation: **From your question, you get silence.**

Parent tutor: **"I hear nothing."** ***(neutral)***

Situation: **From your question, you get a correct answer.**

Parent tutor: **"That's a super answer."** ***(desirable/positive)***

Situation: **From your question, the child gets up and walks away.**

Parent tutor: **"I see you are leaving."** ***(undesirable/negative)***

Take Action

The desirable response should be given a positive reinforcement. An undesirable response might be given a displeased response. A response that is neither desirable nor undesirable should be given no response.

Examples

Situation: **Silence** ***(neither desirable nor undesirable)***

Parent tutor: **"I hear nothing."**
"Let's try a different question."

Situation: **Correct answer** ***(desirable)***

Parent tutor: **"I heard your answer."**
"That's great!"

Situation: **Child gets up and walks away** ***(undesirable)***

Parent tutor: **This one is tricky! You'd probably like to grab the child by the nape of the neck. But that might be exactly what the child wants. If you did, then the behavior might be repeated or escalate into a major battle. Therefore, it's safest to say, "I see you are leaving. When you're ready for help, let me know!"**

Phase Out Reinforcement To Develop Independence

This is the last step toward realizing maximum benefits from this approach. The parent tutor makes a decision about the strength of behavior related to the child's values. Specifically, the parent makes a guess as to whether the child has learned the behavior, so that he is likely to repeat it without needing to be encouraged every time. Start by encouraging new behavior a lot. Then, gradually phase out reinforcers as the specific behavior is learned. When the child repeats desirable behavior without your reinforcers, he has developed independent learning behavior. The child is able to make a learning decision independently by using the process you have taught.

Example (a very personal one!):

Situation: The child is six years old and still sucking his thumb.

Mom: "Danny, for each day that I don't see you sucking your thumb, I'll give you a package of gum."

Sixteen days and 16 packs of gum later:

Mom: "Danny, today is the last day I'm going to give you gum for not sucking your thumb."

Danny: "Then I'll start sucking my thumb again."

Mom: "If that's what you really want, okay. But I want you to know how proud I am that you did not suck your thumb for 16 days. You do what you think is best."

Result: Danny has not sucked his thumb in 38 years!

Summary

This approach works because (a) stimulation causes a response, (b) positive reinforcements cause responses to be repeated, (c) neutral reinforcements cause nothing, (d) negative reinforcements extingish negative responses, and (e) repeated reinforcers become stimulation. You can use this approach by doing these things:

1. Provide stimulation
   (a) Ask questions
   (b) Give direct statements
2. Search for deliberate and observable responses
3. Acknowledge the child's responses
4. Interpret responses as desirable, undesirable, or neutral

5. **Discuss reinforcers**
6. **Develop reinforcer pools**
7. **Reinforce the child's action**
8. **Phase out reinforcement to develop independence**

IX. How Do You Develop an Independent Learner?

Parents promote independent learning by helping the child as suggested in the earlier sections of this book. This section briefly (a) outlines how you'll know your child is becoming an independent learner, and (b) reviews how you can help as a parent tutor.

Listening/Responding to Parent

The independent learner carefully listens and responds to the parent. The child assumes authority and responsibility for communication.

Review: How to listen and respond

Active listening means attending to *what* is said and *how* it is said. Accurate responding means replying to the meaning.

1. **Encourage dialogue between parent and child.**
2. **Avoid interrupting.**
3. **Use silence appropriately.**
4. **Ask questions.**
5. **Show that you notice harmony or disharmony.**
6. **Give and receive feedback.**

Personalizing Parent-Child Interaction

You'll know your child is becoming an independent learner when he takes responsibility for recognizing personal strengths of thinking, feeling, and acting. Your child will also learn from your strengths.

Review: How to personalize interaction

Personalized parent tutoring means responding to the homework situation in terms of how the parent and child think, feel, and act. You personalize learning when you do these things:

TFA Operational Tasks

1. **Conduct a Thinking, Feeling, Acting (TFA) analysis.**
2. **Determine TFA triangle.**
3. **Interpret TFA patterns.**
4. **Build on strengths.**
5. **Supplement TFA pattern.**
6. **Arrange TFA activities in the right sequence.**
7. **Use the ideal TFA parent tutor pattern.**
8. **Relate TFA to listening/responding and motivation.**
9. **Relate TFA to learning concepts.**

Promoting Motivation

The independent learner works to become self-motivated. The motivated child *wants to* do homework efficiently. The motivation comes from within the child.

Review: How to promote motivation

Motivation is when the child *wants* to do homework. You promote motivation when you do these things:

1. **Accept the child as he is today.**
2. **Apply positive reinforcers or rewards.**
3. **Identify your child's needs/wants/desires.**
4. **Help the child understand that homework is meaningful, useful, and relevant.**
5. **Break down homework into smaller (do-able) tasks.**
6. **Help the child to set realistic goals.**
7. **Ask "why" questions.**
8. **Create curiosity.**
9. **Ask thought questions.**
10. **Balance cooperation and competition.**
11. **Relate new information to old information.**
12. **Encourage the child to use new information.**
13. **Organize homework before the child starts working.**

Making Associations

The independent learner takes new content and relates it to what is already known by noting similarities, differences, and spatial relationships. Associations have almost unlimited potential for helping to recall facts.

Review: How to make associations

Association links new information to old information through likenesses, differences, and spatial relationships. Use associations by helping the child to:

1. **Clarify what homework is to be done.**

2. **Identify what the child already knows.**
3. **Create likeness associations.**
4. **Create difference associations.**
5. **Create spatial associations.**
6. **Help the child to use the associations in daily activities.**

"Tasking-Out" Content

Everything in life can be expressed as a task. Once the task is stated it can be broken down into smaller parts. The independent learner views homework as tasks, breaks tasks down to a manageable size, learns needed content parts, and reassembles the content to form the whole. There is no task too complex or too big for the independent learner to break down and tackle!

Review: How to "task-out" assignments

Tasking-out is breaking homework into smaller parts, teaching/learning the parts, and combining the parts to complete the original homework assignment.

1. **Identify the homework task.**
2. **State the homework, starting with an action verb.**
3. **End the homework task statement with a direct object.**
4. **Keep task statements simple and direct.**
5. **Break down the task statement into smaller task statements.**
6. **Teach/learn the smaller task statements.**
7. **Combine the smaller tasks from general to specific or specific to general.**
8. **Quiz for mastery of tasks.**

Seeking Goals

The independent learner knows where he is going by seeking realistic goals. The independent learner sets short, intermediate, and long-term goals.

Review: How to seek goals

Seeking goals draws the child toward accomplishment of a goal that is realistic, and for which there is commitment.

1. **Help the child to set or adopt goals.**
2. **Help the child make the goals realistic.**
3. **Help the child make a commitment to the goal.**
4. **Reduce your direction of the child's learning.**
5. **Add standards of performance to the goals.**

Reinforcing Learning

An independent learner wants to learn. This feeling comes from within the child and helps encourage better work. A child who personalizes, listens/responds, promotes motivation, makes associations, tasks-out content, and sets goals will have success. Success will become a habit!

Review: Reinforcing learning

This approach works because (a) stimulation causes response, (b) positive reinforcements cause responses to be repeated, (c) neutral reinforcements cause nothing, (d) negative reinforcements extinguish responses, and (e) repeated reinforcements become stimulation.

1. **Provide stimulation.**
   (a) Ask questions.
   (b) Give commands.
2. **Search for deliberate and observable responses.**

3. **Acknowledge child's responses.**
4. **Interpret responses as desirable, undesirable, or neutral.**
5. **Discuss reinforcers.**
6. **Develop reinforcer pools.**
7. **Reinforce child's actions.**
8. **Develop independence.**

"What I like about *Parents As Tutors* is its positive, practical approach. . . . It is hard to imagine that a family who uses the approach in this book would not be successful."

— from the introduction by Anne Henderson